

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 11070

EXDIS

CAIRO FOR AMBASSADOR AND USDEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: ISRAELI REACTION TO BEGIN PLAN

REF: STATE 307269

1. REFTEL CORRECTLY IDENTIFIES THE TWO MOST TROUBLE-SOME ASPECTS OF THE BEGIN PLAN FOR MANY ISRAELIS: THE PTOENTIAL DANGER OF THE EVOLUTION OF AN AUTONOMOUS ENTITY TO AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE AND THE FUTURE OF PRESENT JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. WE WOULD ADD TWO ADDITIONAL, ALTHOUGH LESS IMPORTANT, ASPECTS OF THE PLAN WHICH ALSO CAUSE SOME TROUBLE: ECONOMIC FACTORS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAELI ARABS.

2. EVOLUTION TO AN INDEPENDENT STATE. ISRAELI CONCERNS ON THIS POINT WERE PERHAPS BEST EXPRESSED IN A HEADLINE OVER AN ARTICLE IN DAVAR DECEMBER 23 BY PROFESSOR YEHOASHUA PORATH (ALSO MENTIONED IN TEL SECRET

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AVIV 10936); "IT IS A SHORT WAY FROM AUTONOMY TO A PLO STATE". REFTEL STATES THAT "BEGINPLAN DOES NOT CARRY ANY IMPLICATIONS THAT LOCAL AUTONOMY COULD LEAD TO INDEPENDENCE"; BUT THAT IMPLICATION IS PRECISELY WHAT TROUBLES MOST POLITICAL LEADERS HERE WHO HAVE BEEN MADE PRIVY TO THE PLAN. PERES SAID EARLY IN THE WEEK THAT BEGIN'S PROPOSAL "HAS SOWN THE

SEEDS OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE". ISRAELIS SEE GROWING OUT OF THE SEED OF AUTONOMY A STRENGTHENED FEELING OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AMONG WEST BANKERS LEADING TO AN INEVITABLE EVOLUTION TOWARD INDEPENDENCE, WITH ALL THE DANGERS AN INDEPENDENT STATE WOULD PRESENT FOR ISRAELI SECURITY. ISRAELIS CITE OTHER PRECEDENTS TO SUPPORT ARGUMENT THAT INDEPENDENCE IS NEARLY CERTAIN OUTCOME OF HOME RULE FOR AN IDENTIFIABLE NATIONAL GROUP WHICH IS BOUND INITIALLY TO A STATE WHOSE CULTURE IS ANTITHETICAL TO IT. SECURITY IN THIS SENSE MEANS PRIMARILY SAFETY FROM TERRORISM ATTACKS--SHARON'S AND BEGIN'S FAMILIAR THEME ABOUT THE SAFETY OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN. IT BRINGS QUESTIONS OF A PRACTICAL NATURE: WHO WILL CONTROL THE OPEN BRIDGES AND GOOD FENCES? WHO WILL ENSURE DEMILITARIZATION? WHO WILL REGULATE THE RETURN OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES? OTHER COMMENTS WE HAVE HEARD INCLUDE THE FEAR THAT PRESSURE WOULD SOON (IN ONE OR TWO YEARS RATHER THAN FIVE OR TEN) MOUNT FOR WITHDRAWAL OF THE IDF IN SPITE OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AGREED IN A TREATY. THOSE WHO EMPHASIZE THE DANGERS OF AUTONOMY ARE SYMPATHETIC TO DAYAN'S FEELING THAT A WAY MUST BE FOUND TO TIE THE WEST BANK TO JORDAN.

3. FUTURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS. EVEN AMONG MINISTERS AND MKS WHO SUPPORT THE BEGIN PLAN, THERE IS CONCERN
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THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO DEMORALIZATION AMONG SETTLERS AND TO THE ABANDONMENT OF ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS, EVEN IF THERE IS NO DECISION TO REMOVE THEM BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS CONCERN CUTS ACROSS PARTY LINES; GOLDA AND PERES HAVE BEEN JUST AS VOCAL AS BURG AND HAMMER. THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT EVEN IF SETTLEMENTS WERE TO BE PERMITTED IN THE TERRITORIES UNDER AUTONOMY OR SELF-RULE, THEY WOULD BE SOURCES OF POTENTIAL FRICTION AND DANGEROUS FLASH POINTS. HOW COULD THE RULES FOR LOCAL POLICE AND IDF BE ACCURATELY AND PRECISELY DRAWN UP? IF JEWISH SETTLEMENTS WERE TO BE THREATENED BY ARAB INHABITANTS SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, WHO WOULD PROTECT THOSE SETTLEMENTS? THE OBVIOUS ANSWER TO MOST ISRAELIS IS THAT SUCH PROTECTION WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM THE IDF AND THAT IS RECOGNIZED AS A SOURCE OF TROUBLE.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 11070

EXDIS

CAIRO FOR AMBASSADOR AND USDEL

4. ECONOMIC ASPECTS. WHETHER THERE IS TO BE A LINK TO JORDAN OR NOT, ISRAELIS TAXES WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE APPLICABLE TO THE TERRITORIES. IF THAT IS SO, THERE WOULD BE LOWER PRICES IN THE TERRITORIES AND THEY WOULD BECOME, IN THE WORDS OF PORATH, "A VAST SHOPPING CENTER FOR ISRAELIS," WITH AN UNDESIRABLE OUTFLOW OF FUNDS. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE ENDING OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. WITH NO GOI FUNDING, WHERE WOULD THE MUNICIPALITIES ACQUIRE THEIR FUNDS? THE ARAB STATES WOULD PROBABLY BE ONLY TOO PLEASED TO STEP INTO THE BREACH, BUT WOULD INSIST ON A COMMENSURATE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL CONTROL TO GO ALONG WITH THE PURSE-STRINGS. THEY WOULD PROBABLY INSIST ON THE PLO GETTING THE CREDIT OR BEING THE CHANNEL FOR THE FUNDS--OBVIOUSLY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE GOI.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAELI ARABS. THERE IS A FEAR THAT ISRAEL'S ARAB CITIZENS MIGHT WISH CLOSER TIES WITH THEIR ARAB COUSINS IN THE TERRITORIES HAVING
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SELF-RULE THAN WITH ISRAEL ITSELF. THIS COULD LEAD TO DESIRES FOR CHANGES IN BOUNDARIES OR POPULATION TRANSFERS--COULD ISRAEL ACCEPT THESE? YITZHAK NAVON FOCUSED ON THE IDEA THAT IF INHABITANTS IN THE TERRITORIES ARE GIVEN THE OPTION OF ISRAELI OR

JORDANIAN CITIZENSHIP, THEY MIGHT -- UNDER PLO INSTRUCTIONS-- CHOOSE ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP EN MASSE AND VOTE MANY ARABS INTO THE KNESSET IN ORDER TO UNDERMINE THE JEWISH STATE FROM WITHIN.

6. HOWEVER, BEGIN WILL PROBABLY PREVAIL. UNDERLYING THESE SPECIFIC CONCERNS IS A GENERAL FEAR THAT THE PLAN HAS BEEN TOO HASTILY CONCEIVED AND NOT THOROUGHLY ENOUGH STUDIED. THIS IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE SEVEN AND ONE-HALF HOUR CABINET DISCUSSION OF THE PLAN ON THURSDAY AND THE FOUR-HOUR DISCUSSION (TO BE RESUMED THIS EVENING) IN THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE. OPPOSITION AND RESERVATIONS EXIST (THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL RESIGNED FROM THE LIKUD EXECUTIVE LAST NIGHT SAYING THAT BEGIN HAD NOT BEEN ELECTED TO MAKE PEACE BUT TO PRESERVE THE LAND OF ISRAEL) BUT BEGIN CAN MANAGE--THE LIKUD EXECUTIVE VOTED 29 TO TWO WITH ONE ABSTENTION IN FAVOR OF THE PLAN LAST NIGHT AND THE DMC EXECUTIVE APPROVED IT WITH ONLY ONE NEGATIVE VOTE. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TIDE STILL RUNS STRONGLY WITH BEGIN, AND HIS DARING DIPLOMACY CONTINUES TO OUTPACE THE SLUGGISH REACTION OF HIS CRITICS. AS NEGOTIATIONS BECOME MORE DETAILED AND METHODICAL, THE DOUBTERS WILL HAVE MORE CHANCE TO FORCE HIM INTO DEBATE. BUT FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, NO ONE DOUBTS THAT HE CAN HANDLE THE CRITICS WITHIN THE LIKUD--MUCH LESS WITHIN THE OPPOSITION.

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